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Dodge City, Pakistan

Millions of dollars from the Central Intelligence Agency have done wonders for a small town high in the mountains of Pakistan's remote Northwest Frontier Province. The merchants there sell guns, and the CIA-funded Afghan rebels buy them.

Darra, about an hour's drive south of Peshawar, is off-limits to foreigners, especially Caucasians. Tribal laws prevail in the area. The Pakistani government long ago left the ruggedly independent Pashtun tribes to govern themselves.

But Dale Van Atta received special permission to travel recently to Darra, whose name means "pass." For safety's sake, he was accompanied by a high-level Foreign Ministry official and a Pashtun interpreter. The group was met in Darra by a guide whose presence next to Van Atta signaled he was under the protection of that guide's clan.

The precautions were necessary. Darra is as much a page out of the American Wild West as any village in the world today. The main, muddy street is lined with dozens of shops sporting a startling array of weaponry—shotguns, rifles, pistols, machine guns, even an antitank and antiaircraft missile or two.

Hundreds of Pakistanis and Afghans in baggy trousers fill Darra each day, eyeing the wares, sitting cross-legged on dirt floors haggling over prices and packing huge lots of greased rifles in brown paper bundles. Bargaining often escalates to shouting, but the most noticeable noise is the staccato sound of guns being tested into the sky.

The natives have been hand-tooling arms for more than a century in small factories behind the

main thoroughfare, and they have never been busier than now. The battles against the Soviets inside occupied Afghanistan have been good for business. The CIA's funding of the rebels to the tune of \$3 billion since 1979 has made business even better. The town is booming.

The local tribespeople are expert at flawless imitations. One hot item is still the vintage Lee Enfield .303 rifle, which they make. But Darra-produced Kalashnikov semiautomatic rifles have overtaken the Enfields in popularity. Townspeople even make pens that fire .25-cal. bullets. There are two kinds, both made in Darra: One says "Made in Japan" and another, with a bit of local pride, "Made in Darra."

If the CIA's covert arms supply line to the Mujaheddin worked the way it should, Darra would not be a boomtown. No cash is turned over to the Mujaheddin. Instead, the CIA is supposed to purchase Soviet-designed arms in Egypt, Israel, the People's Republic of China and elsewhere for the rebels. After a months-long investigation, we estimate that only 40 percent of the weapons purchased actually make it through the maze of intermediaries to the Mujaheddin.

In some cases, the Pakistani officers who take charge of the shipments once they reach the southern port of Karachi simply steal the weapons and sell them to Pakistani arms dealers. Most of them then make their way to Darra, according to knowledgeable sources. "Darra is the place where Afghans get to buy the weapons American taxpayers have already paid for," one intelligence source confirmed.